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CHOICES

THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT MAGAZINE

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Building a New South African Society

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Photo Essay: Through a Southern Lens
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The New GATT Deal:
What's in it for the South?

China's Own Agenda 21

Cambodia's Difficult Rebirth

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JUNE 1994

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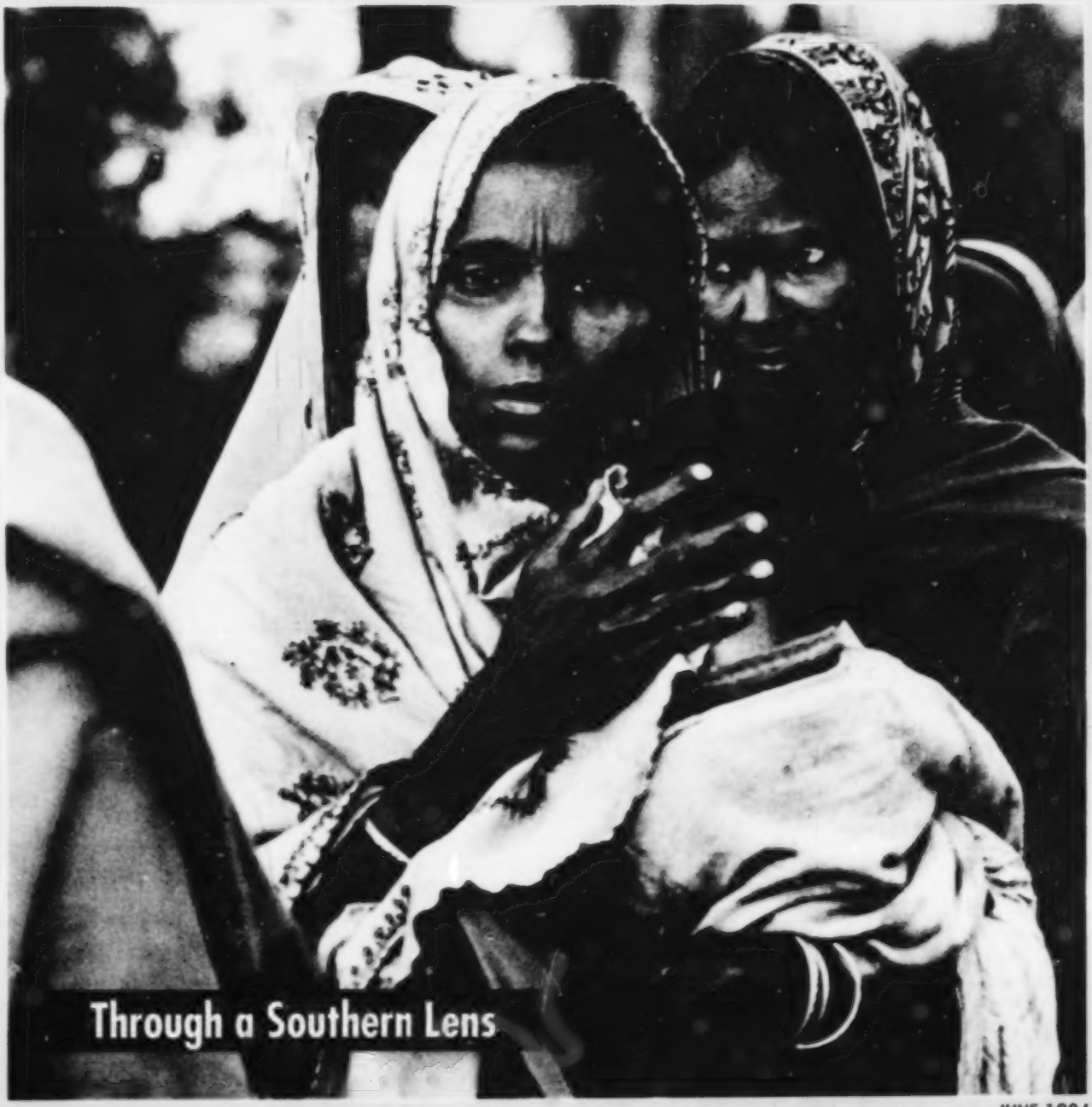

Through a Southern Lens

JUNE 1994

Once again, the **HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT** *challenges the status quo.*

THE 1994 REPORT SHOWS:

- How development assistance has worked for and against the poorest people of the world, and why foreign aid by itself is no answer.
- How ethnic and regional development gaps — like that of Chiapas, Mexico, featured in last year's report — are likely to spur conflict in other countries.
- How warning signals such as rampant unemployment, human rights violations and high levels of military spending can forecast Somalia-like "national breakdowns" elsewhere in the world, and why "human security" should replace "national security."
- How the poorest countries squander scarce resources on arms, and how the five permanent members of the UN Security Council may be fueling global instability by providing 86 per cent of the conventional weapons exported to the developing world.
- How the 1995 Social Summit can be a turning point toward a more humane world order.

The cover of the 1994 report shows the decline in global military spending from 1987 to 1994, which yielded a "peace dividend" of US$935 billion. Unfortunately, little of this has been directed to urgent human needs. If arms spending goes on declining by three per cent a year, another $460 billion could be saved from 1995 to 2000. How will it be spent? This will be one of the challenges for the World Summit for Social Development in 1995.

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CAMBODIA'S DIFFICULT REBIRTH

In the wake of last May's democratic elections, Cambodia is still wrestling with violence, disease, land mines and a desperate need for human-centred development.

Michael S. Yamashita

Residents of Phnom Penh gather in front of the Royal Palace.

By Tomas Larsson

Phnom Penh — The streets of Phnom Penh are eerily empty shortly after nightfall. "No one goes out at night, unless they have to," says a 40-year-old hospital administrator, who requests that his name not be used. "It's like a voluntary curfew." Unemployed men – young and armed – who know little else but war, are blamed for rising banditry in the months following last year's UN-organized elections and the subsequent withdrawal of more than 20,000 UN military and civilian staff. Nearly every day, people on *cyclos* and motorcycles are gunned down and their vehicles stolen.

But on the evening of 8 November, throngs of people defy the insecurity and gather at the Tonle Sap riverfront by the Royal Palace. The tension in the air is mixed with the sweet smell of incense, which people burn as offerings at two small shrines. Nearby, children of the new middle class parade in shiny, pressed clothes and pause to have their pictures taken. Other youngsters, not so lucky, mill about naked and dirty, waiting for handouts. As the sun sets on this city of few street lights, drivers pedal slowly by on wobbly rickshaws, scanning the crowd for a fare. Soon, only the flickering lamps of tiny stalls illuminate the tropical darkness, as people hurry home. Tomorrow is the anniversary of Cambodia's independence, a day of flag-waving and fireworks.

Forty years earlier, on 9 November 1953, the Kingdom of Cambodia, ruled by Norodom Sihanouk, was freed from nearly a century of French rule. In the decades that followed, Cambodia passed through a series of political metamorphoses and violent social convulsions. The last 20 of these years have been characterized by civil strife and almost unimaginable acts of brutality. The Khmer Republic, which was ruled from 1970 to 1975 by General Lon Nol, suffered intense US bombings along the country's western corridor during the Viet Nam war. Then, for three years, eight months and 20 days following the fall of Phnom Penh to communist troops, Democratic Kampuchea was turned into a "killing field" by the radical Khmer Rouge under the leadership of Pol Pot. In 1979, the Vietnamese ended Pol Pot's rule and installed a Socialist regime, which followed the Soviet model of economics and politics. Throughout the 10 years that the regime lasted, Cambodia was largely off limits to development aid. The country suffered a debilitating civil war as the government in Phnom Penh battled various guerilla factions.

The peace agreement in Paris in October 1991 set the stage for a process of political reconciliation that is still working itself out. Aided by a US$2-billion UN peacekeeping mission – described by the UN Secretary-General as the "largest and most ambitious operation" ever undertaken by the UN – free elections were successfully carried out in May 1993, a

Jim Holmes / Panos Pictures

About half of the 350,000 Cambodians repatriated from Thailand are under the age of 15.

P.S. Sudhakaran / UN

A UN helicopter arrives to set up a polling site for the May 1993 elections.

democratic constitution was promulgated, and a coalition government was formed under the aegis of two prime ministers. Yet opposition by the Khmer Rouge has resulted in continued fighting, mostly along the Thai border.

"The seeds of democracy have been sown in Cambodia," says a 25-year-old intellectual who requests anonymity, "but have yet to blossom." He was one among thousands of people attending the festivities marking not only independence, but the recent events that have led to the country's democratic rebirth. Under a gigantic portrait of King Sihanouk, the country's head of state, all four Cambodian factions gathered in front of the Royal Palace in an outward display of solidarity. But while he remains a symbol of national unity, King Sihanouk was absent from the ceremonies,

Michael S. Yamashita

Once a granary for the region, Cambodia today is dependent on food aid.

receiving treatment for cancer in Beijing.

But of concern at the moment is the social dislocation that decades of turmoil have created, along with the considerable development challenges that are now being felt. Cambodia remains one of the poorest countries in the world, with a per capita income of about $170 a year. According to UNDP's Human Development Index, Cambodia ranks 148 out of 173 countries when life expectancy, educational attainment and per capita purchasing power of countries are compared.

The fear had been expressed that, following the political settlement and UN withdrawal, Cambodia could face a wall of "donor fatigue." Fortunately, this has not been the case. Close to $1.8 billion has been pledged at donor conferences in Paris and Tokyo. Directly or indirectly, foreign aid, it is hoped, will help to create an environment in which law and order can take root and development can begin.

"International assistance is flooding in," says Edouard Wattez, resident representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Cambodia. "But there are serious gaps in the aid flow. Not enough is going to rural areas, and the health sector is clearly not sufficiently covered. If aid doesn't reach the Cambodian people," he warns, "there will be no political stability."

"If aid doesn't reach the Cambodian people, there will be no political stability."

UNDP, which reopened its office in Phnom Penh in October 1990 after a 15-year absence, has allocated $91.7 million in programme resources for the five-year period ending 1996. One of the organization's most critical roles is building up a coordination unit at the highest levels of the Cambodian government to manage the large amounts of incoming aid. Rehabilitation of essential infrastructure – with one goal, among others, to increase food production – is another priority. This goes hand-in-hand with efforts to "reintegrate" more than 350,000 refugees who have been resettled from camps in Thailand and an estimated 190,000 people who have been displaced from their homes inside the country.

As part of an urgent need to bring civil stability to Cambodia, UNDP and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) are supporting small-scale entrepreneurs through credit and training. The programmes are targeting former soldiers in addition to women, who make up almost two-thirds of Cambodia's population and head one-third of all households. Another initiative involves the rehabilitation of roads and irrigation systems by local labourers, which will create an estimated 600,000 workdays.

In addition to job creation, there is a

Michael S. Yamashita

With many roads and bridges in Cambodia destroyed, train travel is a crucial means of transport.

SMALL LOANS TO NEW BUSINESSES

"In Cambodia many people are unemployed, which has created great social problems. Only business can provide the necessary jobs," says In Channy, who heads a local NGO known as ACLEDA, which promotes entrepreneurship among Cambodia's most disadvantaged. "We target returning refugees, demobilized soldiers, widows, single women heads-of-households and the disabled," he adds, "and usually we find the highest entrepreneurial potential in women. They may only need a basket of fruit or two trays of cakes to get a business started." ACLEDA, which was established in 1992, receives support from UNDP and the ILO.

P.S. Sutharsan / UN

Women make up a large share of Cambodia's workforce and support a third of all households.

For many Cambodians, tilling the land remains an untenable proposition. "To be a farmer in Cambodia requires a lot of capital – for land, for buffaloes," say Mr. Channy. That is why many people are turning to the informal business sector."

In the two years since it began operations, ACLEDA has made over 1,400 loans totalling more than $288,000. Most loans are for about $40 each, and go to people who want to start up small businesses, such as selling fruit, vegetables or sweets. Approximately 300 loans were made to help launch larger enterprises, such as motorcycle-repair or furniture-making shops.

While ACLEDA's clients do not need collateral to get a loan, guarantees from relatives or friends are often required.

As might be expected, a growing number of small businesses are now flourishing, often headed by severely disadvantaged individuals who might otherwise have found it impossible to fend for themselves. And as an enterprise expands, employees are added, and the benefits to society multiply.

According to Mr. Channy, the greatest stumbling block ACLEDA faces is one of poor attitude, especially among defunct military personnel. ACLEDA's overall loan repayment rate is a healthy 94 per cent, but much lower among clients who are former soldiers. It is not uncommon, says Mr. Channy, for demobilized soldiers to return to the army after receiving help and training in starting a small enterprise – leaving their businesses in the hands of wives or relatives.

"Of course, some former soldiers are doing well in civilian life," explains Mr. Channy, "but generally it is proving quite difficult for many of them to manage and stay with a business. Their years in the army have left many of them accustomed to simply taking what they want from others."

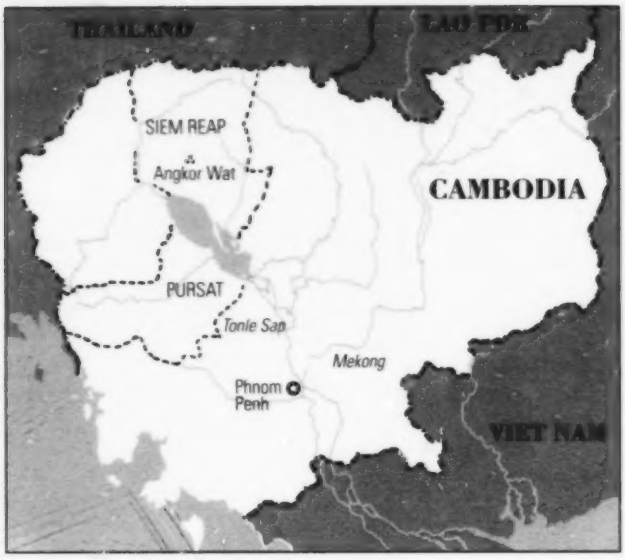
Conditioned by two decades of violence and near anarchy, many 20- to 30-year-olds operate under the belief that "might is right." Until such attitudes change, Cambodia will rely on the enterprise of its women to create many of the jobs it so badly needs. – T.L.

desperate need to help communities begin functioning again. Through a $15 million operation called the Cambodia Resettlement and Reintegration Programme (CARERE), sponsored jointly by UNDP and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, villages like Bat Trang in Pursat Province, 190 kilometres northwest of Phnom Penh, are receiving assistance. There, a school and health centres are being rebuilt, latrines and a water tank installed, and income-generating projects started. Through the CARERE programme, more than 170 schools have been constructed, 2,000 wells dug, and 50 kilometres of irrigation canals restored in three northwestern provinces which have the highest percentage of returnees. With additional funding, the programme will be expanded to Siem Reap Province, and handed over to government officials and local communities in 1996.

In some respects, rural life is returning to a semblance of normality. But land mines and the unrelenting spread of disease, including tuberculosis and stubborn strains of malaria, continue to make parts of Cambodia a "killing field." The presence of land mines, concentrated most heavily in northeastern provinces, has already given Cambodia the gruesome distinction of having the world's highest proportion of amputees: one out of every 258 people has been maimed.

"De-mining is an essential priority for Cambodia's rehabilitation," says Rajeev Pillay, former UNDP deputy resident representative in Cambodia. "Rural development in many areas will be impossible without it."

Cambodian health officials say there are still six to 10 million unexploded land mines, with 100 to 150 reported casualties each month. With the help of national and international NGOs, and under the coordination of the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), mine clearing has taken place in some of the most populated rural areas. Norwegian People's Aid, for example, has literally cleared the way for UNDP-funded rural development efforts by de-mining more than 285,000 square metres of land. With the withdrawal of



UNTAC last November, UNDP was placed in charge of the overall de-mining effort, and is working to make the Cambodian Mine Action Center self-sustaining. To finance the effort, UNDP has set up a special trust fund and has received contributions or pledges of support from donors amounting to $20 million.

From a public health perspective, communicable diseases pose the greatest threat. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), tuberculosis steals the lives of 13,000 Cambodians annually. Malaria kills 5,000 to 10,000, and polio cripples another 1,000 people each year. This is not surprising considering that only two to three per cent of the country's population has been immunized, and only about 50 per cent has access to basic health services.

Yet only 5.6 per cent of the national budget is being allocated to health care in 1994. In spite of a peace agreement, the Cambodian government will still spend over 18 per cent of this year's budget for defence, due to the continued civil strife.

"Cambodia has a very active private health-care sector, including an extensive network of pharmacies. But anyone can start one; there is no control," explains Pene Key, a doctor with WHO, who is currently managing a project funded by UNDP and the UK in strengthening the management of Cambodia's health system.

Land mines and the unrelenting spread of disease continue to make parts of Cambodia a "killing field."

"Moreover," adds Dr. Key, "when people get sick, they have to spend huge amounts of money to get medical care and often fall heavily into debt."

The failure of the public health care system is but one indication of a more general breakdown in the government's ability to deliver even a minimum of social services. "There isn't a lot of money," says Dr. Key. "But the intention is there to do the job. We have to give them a chance and help get the services out to the rural areas."

Indeed, building up the country's beleaguered cadre of human resources is essential if long-term progress is to be achieved. In this area, UNDP's TOKTEN programme, which brings Cambodian expatriates back to their homeland for short-term consultancies, is making a contribution (see page 9). To date, more than 64 Cambodian professionals living abroad have volunteered for missions in their native country. Several of them have decided to stay on, and have assumed posts as ministers or vice-ministers in the new government.

The TOKTEN programme is part of a broader effort, supported by UNDP, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, to rebuild key institutions through which Cambodia's people can plan their future.

This huge task of nation-building in-

Frank Spooner / Gamma-Liaison

A young man ill with tuberculosis, which claims 13,000 lives in Cambodia each year.

The temple complex at Angkor is a potential tourist magnet.

EXPATRIATES COME HOME

Although in a weakened state, it doesn't take long to see that Cambodia has immense potential. In many ways the country is fortunate to be located in economically dynamic Southeast Asia, and to be able to draw from a large pool of well-educated and professionally experienced expatriate Khmer – many of whom have shown a willingness to return.

In 1974, at the age of 18, Chenda Sok left Cambodia to study in France, where he settled for many years. "I was the only member of my family to get out of Cambodia alive," says Mr. Sok. While in France, Mr. Sok became manager of an advertising agency servicing the Côte d'Azur tourism industry. Prior to the Cambodian election he was brought back on a three-month stint to teach business skills to demobilized soldiers, as part of UNDP's TOKTEN (Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals) programme.

Spending two months in Ampil, a resistance camp in the jungle, proved to be an eye-opening experience for Mr. Sok. "I became involved, committed, and decided to stay on," he says. "I feel I can make a difference."

Mr. Sok has since taken up the position of under-secretary of state in the Ministry of Tourism. "I'm very optimistic about Cambodia," he says. In particular, Mr. Sok believes that the country has great potential as a tourist destination. He hopes to contribute his knowledge of international tourism marketing to Cambodia's development.

The most obvious tourist magnet is Angkor Wat, the famed 12th-century Hindu temple. But while the country clearly hopes to attract tourist revenues from such destinations, an awareness is growing about the need to prevent the environmental and cultural erosion that could result from hordes of picture-snapping tourists.

To prevent that from happening, UNDP has helped fund a study that is being carried out by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization on environmental management of the historic site. "We're blessed to have Angkor Wat," says Mr. Sok. "But if we let millions of tourists loose there with no control, their feet will turn the stone structures to sand in no time." – T.L.

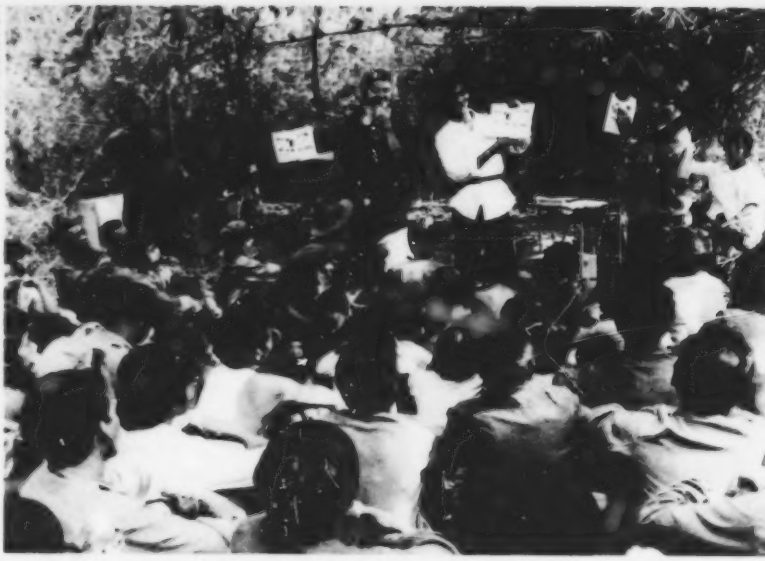
volves, among other things, establishing macroeconomic stability, creating a new legal framework and an independent judiciary, and trimming and reshaping the oversized but under-budgeted civil service. While central planning has been dismantled, economic institutions and a legal framework necessary for the functioning of a market economy have yet to be put in place.

In some areas, progress has been surprisingly fast: Cambodia's rate of inflation, which peaked at over 300 per cent in early 1993, has been rapidly brought under control, and the local currency stabilized. But in other areas, such as administrative reform, progress will be slower. "Rebuilding state institutions that can carry out sustainable human development is a 10- to 20-year task," says Mr. Pillay.

Success will, to some degree, depend on the continued commitment of the international community. But more decisive to the outcome is the trust that can be garnered by the country's leadership, and the determination of the Khmer people to build a new Cambodia: one in which people can safely leave their homes in the evening, and live without fear of poverty and warfare, mines and disease. ■

Swedish journalist Tomas Larsson is the Thailand correspondent for Business Asia.

Increasingly, United Nations Volunteers are helping to protect human rights, organize democratic elections, conduct census surveys or assist in demobilization in trouble spots all over the world. These activities build on the success of the programme's biggest peace-keeping effort, which wound down last year in Cambodia. There, nearly 700 UNVs helped to set up and supervise that country's first democratic election in decades.



John Isaac / UN

Champions of Peace:

UN VOLUNTEERS IN CAMBODIA

By Denise Barricklow

United Nations, New York — Wanted: Veteran professional for year-long job in strife-torn developing country. Must work long hours for nominal pay in harsh and sometimes dangerous living conditions.

Such an opportunity, in most people's minds, would attract little attention. But in the fall of 1992, thousands of people jumped at the chance. The assignment? To go to Cambodia as a United Nations Volunteer (UNV) specialist to assist in that country's elections.

As the description implies, the job was not easy. During their year-long stint, the volunteers that were eventually chosen braved land mines and rumours of attack by groups opposed to the election. By the time the operation was completed, one volunteer and his Cambodian interpreter had died.

Despite the tragedy and hardships, the volunteers succeeded in training 50,000 Cambodian nationals and registering 4.7 million people – more than half the population – to vote. Of those who registered, over 90 per cent cast a ballot in the May 1993 elections.

Trisha Riedy, a 32-year-old American UNV who helped in the election preparations, recalls the joy she felt when she saw 300 people lined up at 4:30 a.m. waiting for a polling station to open. "It was an overwhelming experience," she says. "I watched as old women doubled over from decades of planting rice proudly carried their voter registration cards, some barely able to see. There were young and old men on bicycles, women of all ages, and people who had lost their limbs to mines. All came to secure their right to vote."

Today, the UNV operation, carried out in collaboration with the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), is considered a model of success. "The goal of the operation was to help run an election so that Cambodians could elect a government which was representative of the people's wishes," says Jean-Claude Rogivue, chief of the UNV programme's Asia and Pacific section. "Of course, the situation there is still tense. Not all of the problems have been solved. But a free and fair election did take place and the parties that got the largest number of votes are the parties that are now in power."

Set up in 1970 by the UN General Assembly, the Geneva-based UNV pro-

UN Volunteer Estelle Dubost leads a discussion about voting rights and procedures in Ratanakiri Province.

gramme is administered by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and serves as an operational partner in developmental, humanitarian and peace operations at the request of any UN member state or UN system agency.

UNVs are professionals, most with postgraduate academic credentials and about 10 years of work experience. Usually in their mid-30s to mid-40s, about 80 per cent come from developing countries. UN Volunteer specialists earn no salary but do receive a living allowance.

UNV Executive Coordinator Brenda McSweeney points out that the cost of the UNV operation in Cambodia was about one- fourth of what it would have been had international staff or consultants been used. But, she adds, there are other reasons why the programme worked so well.

"There is a certain credibility that comes from being a volunteer," she says. "People in the communities realize that UNVs are there to help, not for financial or other reasons."

Following a massive two-month search that fanned out over dozens of countries, the programme identified 3,000 professionals willing to serve in Cambodia. Many of them were employed in electoral commissions, while others had relevant management or educational experience. This large pool was pared down to a group of 674 volunteers from 65 countries. Nearly a third were women.

Between May and July 1992, the volunteers were flown into Phnom Penh, where they received six weeks of language training and cultural orientation. That was followed by a one-week UNTAC briefing on election monitoring and civic education.

Some 465 of the trained volunteers were given the title of district electoral supervisor and sent out across Cambodia in teams of two and three. The remaining UNVs provided technical support in 19 different specialties.

The teams registered voters and provided civic education to villagers unfamiliar with the electoral process. They also recruited and trained Cambodian staff, who helped set up electoral offices in 172 districts.

Living on a modest allowance, the volunteers found homes in the poor and often remote communities in which they served. They travelled across their assigned districts in UN pick-up trucks, by boat, on elephants or pony carts to register voters and answer questions about the electoral process.

As the election date approached, political violence throughout the country escalated. One Japanese UNV, Atsuhito Nakata, 25, and his interpreter, Lay Sok Phiep, were killed. Following the incident, the volunteers were recalled to Phnom Penh for a security assessment and safety training. While there, explains Mr. Rogivue, about 50 UNVs decided they would rather not go back to the field. Others were pulled from a handful of districts that UN authorities deemed too risky. Still, the majority expressed a stubborn determination to finish the job they had come to do.

To ensure their safety, those volunteers who returned to the field were asked to travel with a military or police escort. Ms. Riedy, who worked in the Rolea Phiar district in the central province of Kampong Chhnang, says the unstable political situation presented the volunteers with special challenges. "Because of the level of political violence, we had to really work hard to convince people that they did have rights and that things would improve through the UN's efforts."

Ms. Riedy says she and her partner, Madhu Acharya, of Nepal, operated under difficult conditions that were exacerbated by endless rumours – that the Khmer Rouge was stalking their operation, for example, or that towns where they planned to set up polling stations had been bombed. Refusing to cower, the two investigated and ultimately dispelled each false report. "None of the many unfounded rumours prevented the UN from reaching people so they could register to vote," she says.

Ms. Riedy, whose work experience includes directing a cultural exchange programme for Southeast Asian refugees, described her assignment in Cambodia as a "dream come true." Nonetheless, it was demanding.

"After registration, we began an intensive voter education programme and familiarized our staff with the voting process, the constituent assembly, the secrecy of the ballot and human rights. As the political environment worsened, it became our job to reassure every voter in our district that his or her ballot was secret and secure.

"We judged the success of our efforts by the level of participation in the voter education meetings we organized. When people seemed too inhibited to ask questions and when we learned of cases of intimidation, we decided to have our staff go house-to-house to share this crucial information and answer any questions in the privacy of people's homes."

Difficulties were present right up to the elections, which were held from 23 to 28 May. Just before the voting was to begin, Ms. Riedy recalls, shelling was predicted for her district. "You can imagine my reaction when in the early morning hours of the first day I heard five earth-shattering crashes. It turned out that lightning had struck three places in the province." Luckily, that was the only disturbance, and things ran smoothly throughout the six-day election. On the last day of polling, records showed that 94 per cent of the electorate had voted.

"It was the first historic step in Cambodia's long road to political participation and economic development," says Ms. Riedy, "and an experience I will treasure my entire life."

The success of the volunteer programme in Cambodia has meant that the UN will rely more and more on UNV assistance in other peace-building operations. Most recently, the programme was asked to recruit 200 volunteers to serve as observation support officers in South Africa. In Mozambique, another 200 UNVs will help in the demobilization effort and in preparing for that country's upcoming elections. ■

Denise Barricklow is a freelance journalist based in New York.

Building a new South African society

South Africa's first democratic, non-racial election, held at the end of April, marked the end of 45 years of apartheid and 350 years of white rule. A coalition government of national unity has succeeded the minority government of F.W. de Klerk, with newly-elected President Nelson Mandela at its head. The challenges accompanying this momentous transition are enormous. But none is more daunting for the new government than eradicating the glaring disparities which for so long have divided South African society. In interviews with leading experts on South Africa, David Orr reports on what some of these challenges mean.

London — In January of this year, a London seminar entitled "Sustainable economic growth and development in South Africa" was held to debate strategies for building a new African society. Organized by the London School of Economics in conjunction with the UN's Special Committee Against Apartheid, it was attended by economists, policy analysts and other experts from South Africa and the international community. Among the UN organizations and bodies represented were the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank.

As Ibrahim Gambari, chairman of the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid, observed in his opening statement, the story of contemporary South Africa is like "a tale of two cities." For white South Africans, Gross Domestic Product stands at about US$6,500 per person while for blacks it is as low as $670. White South Africans can expect to live 73 years, blacks only 57. Adult literacy among whites is nearly 100 per cent but for blacks only 80 per cent. Infant mortality among white South Africans is 13 per thousand compared to 57 per thousand among blacks. A general consensus among delegates was that the abolition of these inequalities must be a policy priority for the new government.

What is needed are more schools, more housing, more extensive health care and, above all, more jobs. According to Mosebjane Malatsi of the Pan African Congress, 57 per cent of blacks are unemployed, with 300,000 new entrants to the labour market each year.

At the core of the new government policies for reform lies the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) put forth by the African National Congress (ANC). The sixth draft of the RDP, published just prior to the London seminar, states that "no political democracy can survive and flourish if the mass of the people remain in poverty, without land, without tangible prospects for a better life. Attacking poverty and deprivation must therefore be the first priority of a democratic government."

The plan lays out a five-year programme for the construction of one million new houses, electrification of 2.5 million homes, extensive provision of clean water and sanitation, widespread redistribution of land, affordable health care and improved telecommunications. In most urgent need of attention are the black townships and squatter camps which have sprung up on the outskirts of most urban centres.

Allan Boesak, chairman of the Western Cape region of the ANC, told the seminar that there was great need for economic reform, particularly as the country was over-reliant on the export of minerals and lacking a dynamic manufacturing sector. But he added that economic growth could only be achieved if it went hand-in-hand with human development.

Stephenie Hoffyman

A squatter's camp on the edge of Soweto.

When Mr. Boesak admitted with a smile that the RDP was a "rather ambitious programme," he solicited much sympathetic laughter. While most delegates appeared to approve the overall thrust of the upliftment programme, there were widespread differences of opinion as to the time-frame in which it could be achieved.

As drafted, ANC programmes to redress the most glaring disparities will cost an estimated $30 billion over the next 10 years. While some of the money can be drawn from defence and civil service cuts, that will not be enough. Much will depend on the state of the economy in coming years. The national budget deficit is already seven per cent of the Gross Domestic Product and the economy's projected growth rate of only two per cent for this year is slower than most had anticipated.

The governor of the South African Reserve Bank, Chris Stals, expressed confidence that the economy was on the upswing. Inflation is down to single digits and the stock market is rising, as is the price of gold. But Mr. Stals did concede that there were a number of weaknesses in the economy: high and growing unemployment and a large outflow of capital.

"There will be tremendous pressure on the new government for additional expenditure," he told seminar participants, "par-

ticularly on the social upliftment programme. There is no doubt that the needs of the people in this regard are rather desperate and cannot be postponed indefinitely. On the other hand, it will not be an easy task to reconcile the immediate needs with an affordable means."

Yet even those who advise caution insist that the elimination of the socio-economic imbalances in South African life is a prerequisite for a successful transition to a fully democratic political system. As he and other economists pointed out, an improvement in people's living conditions inevitably contributes to higher productivity and to economic growth.

The white 14 per cent of South Africa's population owns almost 90 per cent of the country's land and probably 90 per cent of formal businesses. The black labour force, on the other hand, has been largely characterized by low skills and low productivity. Without major investment and extensive training programmes, this situation will continue.

Initially, the ANC treated white business as an evil to be exorcized from post-election South Africa by means of nationalization and redistribution of wealth. But the ANC now appears to be coming to terms with capitalist principles and cooperating with white-owned businesses. Constitutional constraints and the realities of power-sharing will act as checks on the more radical elements within the party, as will the desire to attract foreign investment.

Whether foreigners will flock to invest in the new South Africa will to a large extent depend on the level of violence over the coming months. An average of 4,000 lives have been lost each year in South Africa since Nelson Mandela was released from jail in February 1990. Tribal bloodletting and township violence showed little sign of subsiding in the run-up to the election; indeed, they seemed to be the terrible price the country had to pay for the power struggle inherent in transition. The violence of so-called "ordinary" crime is also a serious problem. Related to social deprivation, it seems set to continue for as long as such a high percentage of the black population remains unemployed.

The role of foreign donors in meeting South Africa's development needs will be pivotal. To this end, an international donors conference on human resources development is being jointly organized by UNDP and the Commonwealth Secretariat on behalf of the UN. It will be hosted by the new government of South Africa in Johannesburg at the end of June and will seek to stimulate interest among donor countries in helping to address the most urgent development problems.

In cooperation with other UN agencies, UNDP has been supporting the development activities of African national liberation movements, including those in South Africa, since 1975. Until last year, UNDP financed educational and other programmes for young South Africans in Zambia, Tanzania and countries outside Africa. In February 1994, UNDP opened a small liaison office in Johannesburg, prior to securing full representation in the country following the election. One of the objectives of opening the office was to support the efforts of South African authorities and the Commonwealth Secretariat in organizing the upcoming donors conference.

"There are two societies in South Africa," explains Alieu Sallah, chief of UNDP's division for Southern Africa. "We must marry these two societies without affecting what has already been achieved in terms of development. What we need is to develop new skills, refocus existing skills and to broaden horizons. We need to empower people to help themselves."

Still a world apart

South Africa has officially abolished apartheid. Yet glaring disparities remain.

- **Assets** — The white 14 per cent of the population owns almost 90 per cent of the land and most of the formal businesses.
- **Poverty** — Half the population, mostly black, lives below the poverty line. Gross Domestic Product for whites is about US$6,500; for blacks, $670.
- **Life expectancy** — Whites 73 years, blacks 57 years.
- **Children** — Infant mortality among whites is 13 per 1,000; among blacks, 57 per 1,000. Moreover, many black children are stunted by malnutrition: 40 per cent of rural children and 15 per cent of urban children.
- **Literacy** — Adult whites 100 per cent, adult blacks 80 per cent.
- **Education** — Three-quarters of black teachers are either unqualified, or underqualified, for their jobs. The education system thus perpetuates a vicious circle of deprivation and discrimination.

Sources: *Human Development Report 1993, The Economist.*

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CHOICES asked three spokespersons at the conference to share their views on South Africa's development needs. Following are excerpts from their interviews with David Orr.

Ibrahim Gambari
Nigerian ambassador to the UN and chairman of the UN Special Committee Against Apartheid

South Africa is in for a bumpy few years because of the enormity of the reconstruction task and the intensity of expectations among the oppressed that a dramatic change will occur in the quality of life soon after the elections. But it's in people's best interests not to demand immediate results or to vent their anger through violence – this will only discourage investment in the country.

Hardest to convince will be the younger, disadvantaged members of society who see no prospect of an improvement in their circumstances. I believe there is a great need for more positive role models for the young within the ranks of the black community.

The new democratic government must address the problems created by decades of apartheid in the critical areas of housing, health, education and employment. It must also redirect public spending so that infrastructural facilities such as water supply and electricity can be made available to the majority.

Most South Africans struggle for access to the basics of life – land, water, work – and 84 per cent of the estimated 30 million blacks are earning less than enough to ensure that their families have adequate nutrition. The huge contradictions and socio-economic disparities in South African society are unlikely to disappear soon.

In my view, the question of housing is central. In a country as potentially wealthy as South Africa no human being should have to put up with the deplorable conditions of the townships, which lack electricity, running water and garbage disposal. Housing also affects other facets of life – people's health, the ability of children to study at home and access to transportation.

The government alone cannot provide all the necessary housing; there must be a partnership between the public and private sectors. The international community must also be mobilized and investment in the expansion of housing must be encouraged. UNDP and other UN agencies must get together to see how they can best help.

Increasing employment is also important so that people can afford to buy or rent property. Unemployment is dangerous for peace and security as well as a terrible waste of human resources. Much money will have to be spent on training and apprenticeships, in helping people acquire necessary technical skills. Again, UNDP will have a major role to play in this respect.

Transition presents a formidable challenge of political management. Not only are there the difficult tasks of constitution writing, nation-building and the fixing of glaring socio-economic inequalities: the government must also seek accommodation among many divergent views and minimize political anxiety. Above all, stalemate or political instability must be avoided because the economic, social and political costs would be indefensibly high.

As I see it, there are two models for South Africa. One is Namibia, which went through a peaceful democratic process with elections in 1990. The other is Angola, where renewed fighting followed the first democratic elections in 1992. The people of South Africa have a choice.

Mohan Kaul
Commonwealth Secretariat director in charge of the South Africa Human Resources Development Programme

There are tremendous challenges in South Africa, and the next year or two will be crucial. During this transition period, action needs to be taken immediately in four vital areas. It is in these areas that we will be looking for support at the UN/Commonwealth donors conference in June.

The first area that needs attention is public administration. Although large numbers of blacks are employed in the public sector, very few occupy senior positions. There is a great need for restructuring of the civil service to ensure that black South Africans take senior jobs in government, at both central and local levels. A realistic target would be that at least 600 of

the 3,000 top civil service positions be filled by blacks as soon as possible.

The integration of the existing administrative structures into an effective non-racial administration is a clear priority. Under the new system, there will be nine provincial administrations that will be responsible for education, housing and health. Also, the police and military will have to be reformed and restructured. This will require education and retraining to facilitate their role in the new democratic society, along with the promotion of women in the security services and black advancement.

The second area is that of the private sector. The ANC has said that two and a half million new jobs will need to be created in the next few years. Since there's unlikely to be major job creation in the government sector, the emphasis will have to be on encouraging self-employment and starting up small businesses. Trade and entrepreneurial skills will have to be taught, and fast-track managerial training programmes will need to be introduced to produce more senior black managers in the larger companies.

The third area concerns the role of non-governmental organizations. Indigenous, community-based organizations have made a tremendous contribution to development in recent years by providing basic services. And economic constraints will make it difficult for the government to undertake all development matters. The network of community organizations plays an essential role in helping with public health and housing at the grass-roots level. Donors should pay special attention to the development of skills among people who manage these programmes.

Finally, there is the education sector. There are very few primary schools for blacks, and the majority of black children still do not receive full primary school education. This needs to be addressed. Presently, half of all black pupils drop out between the first year of primary and the first year of secondary education, compared to less than one per cent of white children.

Allan Boesak
Chairman of the Western Cape region of the African National Congress

You cannot talk about development and democracy if you do not take people's needs and aspirations seriously, which is what the Reconstruction and Development Programme is all about. What is the RDP? It seeks to mobilize all our people and all our country's resources in the final eradication of apartheid and in the building of our common future. We recognize that it is one thing to have a set of promises; it is quite another to be able to translate those promises into the realities that will make a fundamental difference to the lives of all our people, especially those who need these changes most.

The RDP has been drawn up by an ANC-led alliance, but in consultation with other key organizations. We have consulted with NGOs and research organizations, and will continue to do so until this programme becomes fixed as government policy.

Our history has been a bitter one, dominated by colonialism, racism, apartheid and repressive labour policies. The result is that poverty and degradation exist side by side with lavish wealth. Income distribution is racially distorted and ranks among the most unequal in the world.

Our economy was built on a systematically enforced racial division in every aspect of our society. Segregation in education, health, welfare, transport and employment left deep scars of inequality and economic inefficiency. The result has been that in every sphere of our society – economic, social, political, moral, cultural and environmental – South Africa is confronted by serious problems. There is not a single sector of South Africa or a person living in it untouched by the ravages of apartheid.

Over the years, millions of ordinary South Africans have struggled against this system to improve their lives and bring about a more just society. It is upon this collective heritage that the RDP is being built, and it is from this heritage that the RDP will draw its own strength to propel itself forward to remake and reshape our society.

We need to democratize the economy, we need to ensure participation and accountability in policy-making. We need to reduce in-

equalities in income and wealth and to reintegrate our economy into the highly competitive world economy; and we need to develop the South African region on a cooperative basis.

An important and controversial area is mines and mineral processing. We believe that the minerals in the ground belong to all South Africans, to our future generations. The democratic state will intervene to ensure that they are not recklessly depleted, and that future growth contributes to the development of the economy and benefits all the people rather than only a few wealthy families who control the industry.

Louis Geldenhuys
Director and economist, SMK Stockbrokers, Johannesburg

The big question is how fast you can do what in South Africa. We have to improve the standards of services for a wider section of the community. But it's a pipe dream to believe there is going to be the same level of education for everyone in five years' time. Just because there is an upmarket area in Johannesburg called Santon, it does not mean everyone can live there. We don't have the ability to move that quickly.

We will need a phased approach to reprioritizing government spending. We will have to set targets: by the year 2000 to construct so many houses, for example. We can't have houses and clinics for everyone immediately. We don't have the capacity to provide everything right now. The economy is growing slowly, at only two per cent this year. We can't increase the total level of government spending because you can only tax the people to a certain degree. We can redirect some spending from areas such as defence to providing more equitable social services. But even defence spending has been cut back dramatically.

The government of national unity will have to sell its political and economic policies to the South African people. This will be very important during the next two years.

Part of the Reconstruction and Development Programme might have to include some sort of labour-intensive public works schemes such as those initiated in the US during the Depression of the 1930s. These could involve the building of roads or water supply systems in squatter areas on the outskirts of our towns. There is a very high rate of urbanization and people are flocking to the cities to look for jobs.

It's not enough to rely on money generated by taxes to fund the country's very necessary upliftment and reconstruction programme. We'll have to create a strong sense of civic pride and national will among South Africans. We must not let everything be wrecked by some lunatic elements on the political fringe.

South Africa has a lot going for it: good infrastructure, mineral wealth, technical know-how. It is a pretty sophisticated economy in some respects. We've got a strong base and I think foreign investors will be attracted to the country. That is important because it is much easier to redistribute wealth when there is growth in the economy. We can only rely to a certain extent on being able to cut up the cake we have right now.

Initially, we'll need support from abroad. But we can't rely on loans for too long as these have to be repaid! Africa has learned its lessons on over-borrowing in the past. We can't enter a fool's paradise. We have to be realistic.

I believe it is going to be better for the South Africans now than it was for Eastern Europeans after the Berlin Wall came down. South Africa has the advantage of having experience with markets. We're in the position of having a system which is already functioning and is more reactive to changes.

In the last three to five years we have started to talk about the genuine problems in society and that, for me, is encouraging. That is why we are much better off than we used to be. We're talking about issues like poverty and lack of housing. We've already made great progress in the area of reconciliation. I am quite optimistic. ■

David Orr, an Irish correspondent based in London, writes for The Observer *and other publications.*

CHINA'S OWN AGENDA 21

With threats to its environment and quality of life becoming more serious by the day, China is making commitments for a greener future.

By Chen Xiuxia and Wang Weiqun

Forrest Anderson / Gamma-Liaison

Beijing — China's economic boom caught the world's attention in 1993. Outside the country, exaggerated media claims alleged that the Chinese economy was already the third largest in the world, and that China was going to be the "next superpower" of the 21st century.

To be sure, there are plenty of signs that the standard of living of the Chinese people is steadily improving, particularly in the country's coastal areas. And more and more, these changes are beginning to spread into China's interior.

One indication of this rapid economic advancement is the growing abundance of material goods that have come to symbolize progress: television sets and electronic gadgets, refrigerators, air conditioners and motor vehicles, to mention only a few, with fast food chains and high-rise buildings becoming more the norm than the excep-

Top: Urban smog.
Right: Coping with pollution in Beijing.

tion. And while these changes were initially welcomed by the Chinese people, they are now seen by some as a mixed blessing. No longer can one say with certainty that the changing quality of life in China is an absolute gain. Indeed, the country's wondrous ecosystems and environment have suffered in the speedy rush towards modernization. Growing problems such as inefficient energy consumption, hazardous levels of air pollution – clouding many of China's age-old cities – and poor controls on industrial waste disposal are undermining the sustainability of China's development.

Forrest Anderson / Gamma-Liaison

Some of the negative aspects of China's rapid growth are widespread, hazardous and eminently visible: the increase in fly ash dust from belching smoke chimneys, the urban smog that results from exhaust fumes of motor vehicles, the growing accumulation of solid waste resulting from the uncontrolled use of indestructible plastic sheets and styrofoam containers, the stench of contaminated rivers and waterways.

But there are other consequences of industrialization and economic growth that pose a danger not only to the Chinese people but to the planet as a whole. Dying forests have been traced to acid rain, and global warming to excessive use of fossil fuels and the emission of greenhouse gases. It was only recently that scientists linked holes in the Earth's protective ozone layer to certain chemicals known as ozone-depleting substances (ODS) commonly used in refrigerants and aerosols.

For these and other reasons, the Chinese government has been quick to dispute the optimistic claims for its future that have been touted in the foreign press. It knows that the modest goal of achieving a comfortable standard of living for a developing country with more than one billion people will be a long and difficult task, taking at least several more decades. And it is very aware that the industrial development strategy of high inputs, high consumption and high contamination is quickly reaching a dead end.

Michael S. Yamashita

Some 14 million tons of coal dust and 16 million tons of sulfur dioxide are discharged from industrial plants in China each year.

Forrest Anderson / Gamma-Liaison

High concentrations of airborne dust and other emissions from the burning of coal can pose serious health hazards.

China has also demonstrated that it has the political will to adopt a strategy for sustainable development. It played an active part in the Earth Summit in 1992, and ratified *Agenda 21* and other important initiatives that were adopted at the world conference. *Agenda 21* calls on all countries to draw up their own national action plans for sustainable development, which China has already completed. According to Richard Conroy, assistant resident representative for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Beijing, "China is very much in the lead among all the world's countries in developing a comprehensive strategy of this type." Through its five-year, US$176 million programme in China, UNDP is helping China carry out this national strategy, which includes phasing out ozone-depleting substances and the introduction of environmentally-sound technologies (see page 23).

At a national conference held in October 1993 in Beijing, Qu Geping, chairman of the committee on environmental protection in the National People's Congress, laid out the cost of environmental pollution to China's long-term development. In a written report he disclosed that "more than 14 million tons of coal dust, 16 million tons of sulfur dioxide, 36 billion tons of contaminated water and 700 million tons of industrial waste and other garbage are being released in China every year. The economic loss caused by environmental pollution exceeds 100 billion yuan RMB [roughly $17 billion] annually." But the loss in China cannot be measured solely in economic terms: pulmonary disease linked to hazardous air pollution levels, and to such emissions as sulfur dioxide, has become a marked cause of death here.

China currently spends about 0.7 per cent of its Gross National Product on environmental protection. In a recent issue of *China Daily*, Mr. Qu was quoted as saying that he hoped the government would increase this to 1-1.5 per cent. He also recommended that 8-10 per cent of industrial investments be used for environmental protection, as opposed to the current 4.5 per cent.

To better understand China's environmental problems and what is being done to remedy them, a team of more than 130 journalists toured the country to get a first-hand look.

Currently, one of the fastest growing areas in China is the Yangtze River Delta in east China's Jiangsu Province. There, township enterprises in the three municipalities of Suzhou, Wuxi and Changzhou have grown to comprise two-thirds of the province's manufacturing sector.

Suzhou used to be known as the Venice of China: canals criss-crossed the quaint landscape of this pastoral town. By the 1960s, many canals had already dried up, and the few remaining were dirty and foul-smelling. Today, this small town has become engulfed in an industrial sprawl that stretches dozens of kilometres in all directions. It enjoys the dubious distinction of leading Chinese cities in

the amount of wastewater that it releases each year.

Wuxi, on the shores of once beautiful Lake Taihu – which gave inspiration to poets in centuries past – has a water contamination rate 20 times higher than the national average, and an air pollution level 32 times higher. The situation in Changzhou is somewhat better, but its water and air pollution rates are 10 and 20 times above the national average, respectively.

The Yangtze River Delta, consisting of Jiangsu and Zhejiang Provinces and the city of Shanghai, has always been known as a land abundant with fish and rice. The ecosystem of Lake Taihu has been the foundation of economic and social development in that region, known as the Golden Triangle. But the indiscriminate use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, along with other industrial processes, is resulting in more than 40,000 tons of phosphorous and 3,000 tons of nitrogen being discharged into Lake Taihu each year, either directly or via smaller rivers and streams.

There is a popular saying describing the lakes and rivers in the Yangtze River Delta. It goes like this: "In the 1950s people washed rice and vegetables in these waterways. Alas, water quality began to deteriorate in the 1960s. By the 1970s fish and prawns had disappeared, and the water was no longer fit even to wash toilet bowls in the 1980s."

In 1989, more than a million tons of cereals produced in Jiangsu Province contained toxic substances in excess of acceptable standards. Fluoride contaminants in the air destroyed a batch of new silkworm eggs in a national breeding base in Zhenjiang, Jiangsu Province. One-third of the water resources in rural areas of the province was badly contaminated by heavy concentrations of acid rain.

Prior to 1992, the National Environment Protection Agency (NEPA) had put in place specific anti-pollution standards relating to the design of new factories. Industries that did not comply with these standards were liable to be shut down. Yet sources from the agency acknowledge that less than 50 per cent of the township enterprises in Jiangsu and Zhejiang Provinces are honouring these standards, and that the rapid growth of township enterprises has become one of the most serious environmental problems in China's rural areas.

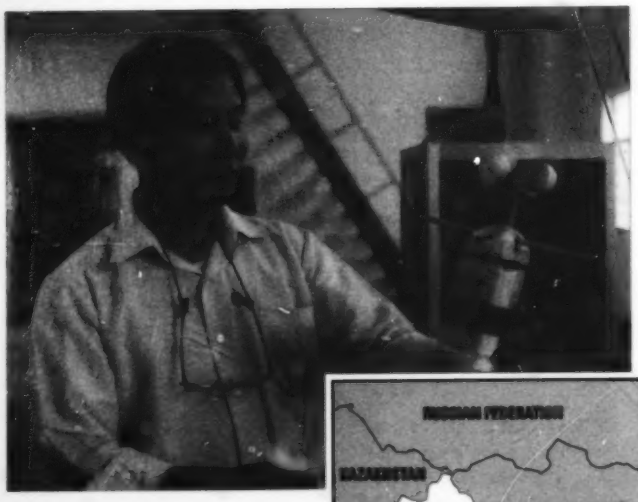
The majority of the large and medium-sized state-owned enterprises were built at a time when there was less awareness of environmental concerns. According to a source at NEPA, there are some 3,000 public sector enterprises among the chemical, metallurgical, papermaking, food processing, power generation and building material industries in China. And while they represent only four per cent of the country's manufacturing firms, they are responsible for discharging 60 per cent of the annual volume of industrial pollutants.

The city of Baoji, in central China's Shaanxi Province, is illustrative of the pollution problems created by state enterprises. Baoji has three heavy industrial plants – producing cement, iron and coke – that were built in the 1970s. Insufficient attention was paid to their location at the time, and because of prevailing winds, hazardous air pollutants from their chimneys would blow over the city. Moreover, since the city is in a valley, harmful substances were not easily dispersed into the atmosphere.

The Baoji municipality has already spent 20 million yuan ($3.3 million) since 1986 to control fly ash dust and to make technical renovations in these factories. Additionally, it has decided that the coke and iron factories are to be shut down, and that no new factories will be built in that part of the city.

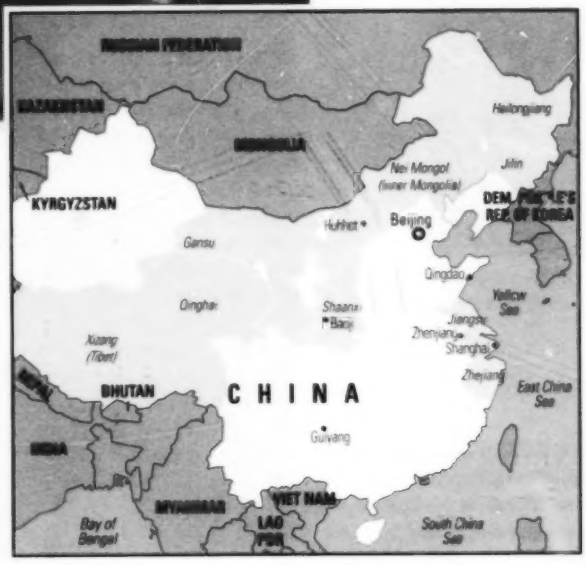
While most Chinese readily agree that environmental protection is a priority, the enterprises responsible are concerned about the extra costs of relocating, or of refitting the factories with expensive, environment-friendly technologies. They maintain that economic development and environmental protection is an "either-or" proposition. But two paper factories in northeast China show that this is not necessarily so.

One paper mill in Heilongjiang Province, for example, dumps close to 10,000 tons of toxic wastewater into the Songhua River each day, killing the fish and shrimp that were once abundant in that beautiful river. In 27 years of operations, the company has been in the red for 17 years and has broken even for 10 years. Since 1990, its cumulative debt has reached



Sid Kane / UNDP

A UNDP-supported project in Nanjing is helping to analyze wind patterns in cities and towns to determine safe locations for coal-burning power plants.



26 million yuan ($4.3 million), including 6 million yuan ($1 million) in pollution fine arrears.

In contrast, the Jilin Paper Mill in neighbouring Jilin Province, once a major polluter of the same river, built a unit to recover soda ash from its wastewater, and also stopped inky water from recycled newsprint and pulp from flowing into the river. The new unit reclaims 47,000 tons of soda ash annually, which has generated 28 million yuan ($4.6 million) in extra income each year.

While it can be demonstrated that economic development and environmental protection are mutually reinforcing, lack of capital and the availability of new "green" technologies remain serious obstacles. In the view of Song Jian, chairman of the State Council's Environmental Protection Commission, it is this technology that will provide the key to sustainable development. Over the next seven years, he says, China will spend 200 billion yuan ($33.3 billion) on environmental protection, most of which will be used to develop new technologies and equipment needed to reduce the level of pollutants being discharged in China each year.

But a successful national programme will also require the adoption of specific laws, coordinated action by the many agencies concerned and effective law enforcement. Above all, there is the need to educate the general public in the importance of preserving China's natural resource base. Only public awareness and concern can strengthen the political will needed to implement the costly but crucial strategy of sustainable development, the necessity of which becomes more apparent by the day.

Viewed in this context, the road ahead for China is a long and arduous one. Only by persisting in its policy of openness can China benefit from the experience of other countries, build partnerships with international organizations and improve prospects for meaningful development so that the country's environmental riches will be safeguarded for future generations. ■

Chen Xiuxia is a freelance journalist living in Beijing. Wang Weiqun is a staff reporter with the China Youth Daily.

Louise Gubb / UNDP

UNDP is supporting the development of renewable energy in China, including the use of solar panels.

While the goal of achieving sustainable development is enormous, China has already demonstrated the will to confront the challenge head on and to assume its global responsibilities.

In 1991, for example, China was one of the first developing countries to sign the Montreal Protocol on ozone-depleting substances (ODS), and has agreed to phase out such substances entirely by the year 2010. As the largest producer and consumer of ODS in the developing world, the decision will require investments estimated at $2.4 billion.

Toward this end, and with help from UNDP and the Government of Finland, China has completed an assessment of ODS usage and is now in the process of taking follow-up action. UNDP is currently supporting more than 20 projects valued at $6.9 million to identify alternatives for ozone-depleting substances and to obtain the necessary equipment and technology for their manufacture. China's annual consumption of ODS — used in the manufacture of refrigerants, aerosols, solvents and fire extinguishers — stands at about 50,000 tons and is growing at a rate of about 11 per cent a year.

Increasing energy efficiency is another area of major concern to the Chinese government. China consumes 1.1 billion tons of coal annually, and ranks third, after the US and the former Soviet Union, in its emission level of carbon dioxide, a principal greenhouse gas. Millions of tons of sulfur dioxide and coal dust are also released into the atmosphere from the burning of coal, posing serious health hazards. While China cannot dispense with coal as its main source of energy, says UNDP's Richard Conroy, projects financed by UNDP and by the Global Environment Facility are helping to find alternatives and to improve the efficiency of coal use.

One such project seeks to recover methane gas from coal mines, for use as an alternative source of fuel. Another is assisting cities such as Qingdao, Guiyang and Hohhot in computer modelling to estimate future energy needs and projected pollution levels, so that a strategy for minimizing pollution can be worked out.

Still other programmes supported by UNDP include the development of geothermal, solar, hydropower and wind energy sources in remote areas such as Gansu and Qinghai Provinces, and in the autonomous regions of Tibet and Inner Mongolia.

Other priority areas included in *Agenda 21* are also being slated for action. With assistance from UNDP, the Government of China is organizing a high-level conference for mid-1994 in which 50 sustainable development projects will be presented to outside donors for financing. ■

Food First

By James Gustave Speth

Ruth Massey / UNDP

By the time this day is over, about 40,000 human beings – mostly children – will have died from hunger, malnutrition and related causes. Today and every day the deaths will mount, reaching an annual toll of 13 to 18 million. Few of these people will have been caught up in famine or other emergencies. Most will have suffered from a "silent" assault – the kind that seldom makes the headlines, but which claims its victims just as relentlessly.

It is intolerable that such deprivation and suffering should be allowed to exist in a world of potential food plenty. Since becoming Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), it has struck me repeatedly that at the centre of our development efforts must be a concern with food, people and agriculture. Having enough food is fundamental to all else. At the most basic level, this may entail humanitarian relief to assist people in emergency situations. In the transition from relief to development, however, we must look at systems for ensuring that societies have the capacity to produce or purchase the food they need and that it is accessible to all.

At UNDP, we are integrating the objective of "sustainable food security" into our development programmes. Sustainable food security fuses the goals of household food security and sustainable agriculture; it requires both. It requires looking not only at the aggregate supply of food, but also at the distribution of income and land, and at other issues: Do people have enough income to buy food? Enough land to grow their own food? Does the food distribution system deliver food where it is needed? How much food is wasted due to inadequate distribution systems? What are the implications of trends in population growth for future food needs? What is the status of women in society, and what opportunities do women have to alter rapid population growth rates? What is being done to regenerate the resource base for food production? These questions need to be asked and answered in every country UNDP serves.

The challenge of sustainable food security is immense, and it is growing. One billion people – 20 per cent of the global population – are too poor to obtain enough food to sustain normal work. Half a billion are too poor to obtain the food needed for healthy growth of children and minimal activity of adults. Today's failure to feed people, however, may be but a prologue to a much larger failure in the future. Given likely population increases, world food output must triple over the next 50 years if the world's people are to have a nutritionally adequate diet. It will be difficult enough to achieve this expansion under favourable circumstances, and conditions may be far from favourable.

For example, according to recent estimates by the world's leading soil scientists, an area of about 1.2 billion hectares – the size of China and India combined – has experienced moderate to extreme soil deterioration since World War II as a result of human activities. Over three-fourths of that deterioration has occurred in the developing regions from causes such as overgrazing, deforestation, land-clearing, unsound agricultural practices and in-

creased soil salinity and waterlogging, largely from irrigation. Other environmental threats to the agricultural resource base include loss of water and genetic resources, adverse effects of pesticides and climate change, both local and global.

At the most aggregate level, the required increase in food production could be met if production grew at the historic average, that is, at the two per cent per annum rate achieved over the past half-century. But is this realistic? To produce three times more calories, all the land currently under cultivation around the world would, within 50 years, have to attain levels of productivity as high as those exhibited by the very best cropland today.

Given likely population increases, world food output must triple over the next 50 years if the world's people are to have a nutritionally adequate diet.

To this challenge add the possibility of diminished returns from the technological, energy and other inputs that have made agriculture so successful. Some experts believe that most of the potential for increased output of cereals – from improved plant varieties, from increased use of pesticides and fertilizers and from expanding the area under irrigation – has already been captured. Indeed, the *1994 State of the World* report, prepared by Worldwatch Institute, maintains that there has been an "abrupt deceleration" in the rate of increase in yields – from a 2.3 per cent annual increase in yield per hectare between 1950 and 1984, to a one per cent annual increase from 1984 to 1993. The "easy options" for increases in yield may be running out.

Viewed from this perspective, the goal of achieving sustainable food security in the decades ahead emerges as one of the greatest challenges humanity has ever faced. Agricultural output must be tripled, and people must have the income to buy the food they need. The erosion of the resource base must be halted and then reversed. Failure on any of these fronts will yield unprecedented human suffering.

What will it take to achieve sustainable food security? Obviously, the effort will have to be immense, both in size and complexity. And I do not pretend to have all the answers. Outlined below are a few simple (but not easy) steps that I believe are absolutely essential elements of a serious effort.

First, as citizens of the world, we must all come to see sustainable food security as a fundamental aspect of global peace and human security. This goes well beyond merely denouncing the use of food as a weapon.

Second, we must adopt concrete international goals, such as reducing world hunger by half over the next 10 years. We will never achieve the goal of sustainable food security unless we aim at specific milestones, and assess rigorously our progress in moving toward them.

Third, we must forge a true global partnership, a compact for sustainable food security. All countries – rich and poor – have important roles and responsibilities. There must be reciprocal responsibilities among nations, not one-way transfers.

Fourth, we must see deterioration of the agricultural resource base – terrestrial, aquatic and climatic – for what it is: a major threat to development and a major source of economic loss. Farmers are the largest group of environmental decision-makers in the world. We must ensure that they have the means to make sustainable development a reality where it counts – in the fields and fisheries.

Fifth, we must empower the people who work the land and who keep it productive. They are in the best position to decide the most appropriate ways to graft new technology onto their own traditional knowledge of seed selection, plant protection and nutrient-cycling. Special emphasis should be given to the role of women, the main providers for two-thirds of the poorest households in the developing world, as well as the producers of 60 per cent of all food grown and consumed locally.

Sixth, we must build the capacities of developing

countries, both in government and in civil society. Capacity-building means empowerment for self-reliance. It means strengthening national capacities, both inside and outside government. This is essential for recognition and analysis of problems, for decision-making on courses of action and for management of systems and processes. In the effort to achieve sustainable food security, we must be ready to help developing countries analyze their research needs, mobilize financial resources, establish collaborative research networks with other developing countries and so on. Here, as elsewhere, every UNDP project – indeed, all external development projects – must have as a primary aim the goal of leaving developing-country partners stronger and more capable at a project's end.

Seventh, not only must we build capacity in developing countries, we must also create linkages among researchers in industrial and developing countries. This will help minimize the time lag between discovery and practical utilization. In addition, analysts from various countries must work together to examine future food security issues with different scenarios of population growth, agricultural productivity, markets and trade, climate change, loss of soil and biodiversity and, last but not least, political instability, in order to devise options for rational choices.

We know a good deal about how to rid the world of the scourge of hunger, and how to begin to move toward sustainable food security on a global basis. We know that economic growth and prosperity are necessary, though not sufficient, conditions for eradicating hunger. We know that development efforts must encompass not only food production, but also socio-economic factors, including sustainable livelihoods for poor families, the implications of population growth rates, the status of women and girls and so forth. We also know that good words are not enough. Now more than ever before it is crucial that we marshal the political will to achieve our goals. ■

James Gustave Speth, founder and former president of the World Resources Institute in Washington, DC, is the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme.

Too much of a good thing

While economic prosperity has eliminated the problem of food security in most industrial countries, it has also led to a major increase in the incidence of chronic diseases. A report issued by the World Health Organization warns developing countries that the best way to prevent cancer, heart disease and other degenerative disorders is to avoid the eating habits now common in the world's richest nations. Compared with the diet that fuelled human evolution, today's "diet of affluence" has twice the amount of fat, a much higher ratio of saturated to unsaturated fatty acids, a third of the daily fibre intake, much more sugar and sodium, fewer complex carbohydrates and a reduced intake of micro-nutrients.

While the shift toward rich, disease-producing diets is taking place almost everywhere where per capita income is increasing, developing countries could benefit from the experience of the industrial countries and forestall their risk by promoting healthier diets that are closer to traditional ways of eating. "If they act now, the governments of developing countries can gain for their people the health benefits of avoiding nutritional deficiencies without encouraging the development of chronic diet-related diseases that usually accompany economic and technological development," states the report. A high incidence of cancers, heart disease and other chronic ills need not be the inevitable price for the privilege of socio-economic advancement. ■

Source: WHO Technical Report Series, No. 797, 1990 (*Diet, nutrition and the prevention of chronic diseases*: Report of a WHO Study Group).

REVAMPING WORLD TRADE: What's in it for the South?

Developing countries held their own in the latest round of GATT negotiations. But powerful protectionist interests in key markets in the North will effectively limit their opportunities for faster growth through trade.

Illustration by Igor Kopelnitsky

By Thierry Noyelle

United Nations, New York — On 15 December 1993, a crowded room of exhausted ambassadors and negotiators was transformed by a burst of applause as Peter Sutherland, the director-general of GATT, announced the successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round of negotiations on international trade in Geneva. Frantic last-hour deal-making had brought negotiators to an agreement just in time for President Clinton to present it for approval to the US Congress under his "fast track" authority. Under the fast track mechanism, the US Congress must approve or reject the agreement unaltered. The president's recent victory in getting the North American Free Trade Agreement through Congress makes the ratification of the new GATT deal all but certain — an understood precondition for its adoption by other countries.

Founded in 1947 by a group of 23 countries, current membership in the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, or GATT, numbers 115, including some 90 developing countries. From its inception, GATT has sought to open world markets to ever larger flows of international trade and to prevent countries from returning to the disastrous protectionist policies of the 1920s and 1930s. This has been accomplished over the years through a series of rounds of negotiations aimed at strengthening the rules of international trade, lowering barriers to imports and expanding GATT's sectoral coverage. Until the Uruguay Round, most of the earlier negotiations had focused on manufactured goods.

Started in 1986, the Uruguay Round of GATT negotiations was the eighth in the series, and the first to be named after a developing country. It was also the most ambitious, bringing three new sectors — agriculture, textiles and services — under the GATT umbrella.

The Round got off to a rough start, nearly collapsing several times over a number of critical disputes. In the final analysis, however, it was a bitter confrontation between the United States and the European Union (EU) over the depth of agricultural reform that proved most damaging. It took a two-year stalemate, a change of administration in the US, a near crisis in the EU over its agricultural policy, as well as a mixture of last-minute real-politicking and compromise to resolve the deadlock and to open the door to a conclusion.

How did developing countries fare after more than seven years of tortuous negotiations? The outcome for the South is mixed. Developing countries did reasonably well in negotiations establishing or strengthening rules governing international trade. As a result, barriers will fall and global trade will expand. Projections by the OECD, GATT and others estimate a net gain of up to US$270 billion in world trade over the next decade. Developing countries, mostly in Asia and Latin America, may capture as much as $80 billion of this new wealth. Nevertheless, continued protectionism in the North will limit the degree to which markets of direct interest to the South open up, especially in textiles and agriculture, effectively limiting developing countries' opportunities for faster growth through trade.

Yet any assessment of the Round must be couched in caution. The scope of the agreement is so broad and so com-

plex that no one can tell for sure what its true impact will be. Moreover, the new agreement must be viewed in the context of other forces that may affect both national economies and world trade in years to come. In the words of one European negotiator: "What happens in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union in terms of economic reform may have a far greater impact on changing global trade flows in the next 10 years than the Uruguay Round." And trade gains for developing countries will materialize only if domestic economies adjust to the jolt created by greater liberalization of markets.

Making rules and opening markets

The breadth and depth of the Uruguay Round can be judged in part by the fact that it took no less than 15 separate working groups to negotiate the new agreement. For agriculture, textiles and services, new trade rules and obligations had to be formulated and commitments to the opening of markets worked out.

The Round also sought to bring such controversial issues as Trade Related Investment Measures (TRIMS) and Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) under GATT's domain. Many developing countries have long viewed foreign direct investment as falling under their national sovereignty. The TRIMS negotiations were controversial because they sought to bring aspects of foreign investment under a multilateral framework of rules. Likewise, the TRIPS negotiations generated heated

Levelling the playing field

"Up until and including the Tokyo Round, developing countries were largely bystanders to the GATT negotiations," says Fernando de Mateo, a senior trade negotiator for Mexico. "Many countries signed on to the outcome of previous rounds of negotiations simply because the cost of not doing so was higher than that of joining. But during the Uruguay Round, things changed," he adds. "For the first time developing countries were active participants and were able to influence the outcome in major ways."

The reasons for this new involvement on the part of developing countries are undoubtedly diverse. For one thing, the inclusion in the negotiations of agriculture and textiles – two areas of critical importance to a large number of developing countries – provided a greater incentive for their participation. Changes in the economic environment of the 1980s also led to renewed interest in trade. These include growing pressure on developing countries to increase exports to repay their external debt and the success of export-led strategies among a number of developing Asian countries. Finally, as a number of negotiators have emphasized, technical assistance provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) through the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) during the Round was critical in helping developing countries identify their interests and strengthen their negotiating positions. In the view of B.K. Zutshi, India's ambassador to the GATT: "This may have been one of the most useful investments by UNDP in recent years."

With support from UNDP amounting to almost $10 million over the period 1987 to 1993, UNCTAD provided direct and indirect assistance to trade negotiators from Africa, the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America. Experts, many from the developing world, were commissioned to study key issues and to help identify markets of special interest to developing countries. Forums were organized in the various regions to provide negotiators with an opportunity to reflect on thorny issues and to strengthen feedback from their capitals. Numerous informal meetings were also organized in Geneva to provide on-the-spot assistance.

One of the best examples of the impact of such assistance can be seen in the changing attitude of the developing countries in the area of trade in services. Their initial view was that negotiations on services were mostly in the interest of the North. Over time, however, they shifted to the position that they could benefit tremendously in this area if they negotiated carefully. UNDP's support was critical in helping translate this changed view into new bargaining power. The scope and structure of the General Agreement on Trade in Services, negotiated as part of the Uruguay Round, owes much to the contribution of developing country negotiators.

The end of the Round does not eliminate the need for further assistance. Indeed, negotiations in a number of critical areas are continuing; others will be started in areas such as environment and trade, which up until now have remained outside the purview of GATT. Moreover, implementation of the newly negotiated agreement will demand that developing countries review and, in some cases, rewrite existing policies and regulations to bring them into conformity with the agreement. This is particularly true in the new areas of intellectual property rights and services.

In light of these needs, UNDP is working with UNCTAD on a new programme that is examining the relationship between environmental policies and trade. At present, the programme is undertaking 15 country case-studies and two small regional projects. But far more will be needed in this and other areas. — **T.N.**

debate from the start because of their potential to raise the cost of key technologies – including pharmaceuticals, seeds and software – to developing countries.

Parallel to these negotiations, the Round pushed for further opening of markets and the strengthening of rules in sectors such as manufacturing that are already covered by GATT. Finally, it laid out a plan for a new, presumably stronger entity called the Multilateral Trade Organization to supersede the GATT (renamed, at the last minute, the World Trade Organization). Needless to say, such an ambitious agenda put enormous stress on the negotiating capacity of most developing countries (see page 28).

Within this broad and complex landscape, a consensus is emerging that developing countries did fairly well in the negotiations on rules and obligations, with the exception of TRIPS. This is true for a number of reasons. In general, clear and strong multilateral rules and obligations that emphasize non-discrimination among trading partners make for a predictable and transparent world trade environment. This tends to work in favour of the weakest countries, which otherwise would be at the mercy of unilateral actions by bigger and stronger partners. Developing countries, in that respect, point to improvements in the system of dispute settlement. The new system should make it more difficult for industrial countries to retaliate unilaterally against weaker trade partners under national laws that actually violate GATT rules.

Developing countries also did well in negotiating the rules and obligations of the new General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), which governs trade in areas such as financial services, transportation, communications, business services and construction. Among other things, the text extends the principle of unconditional, most-favoured-nation treatment to services. This means that any concession or privilege granted by one party to another must be granted to all parties, preventing countries from giving preferential access to their market to trading partners of their own choosing. The text also recognizes that developing countries can liberalize access to their service markets gradually so as to take into account their degree of development.

In the critical area of agriculture, the potential benefits for the South must be viewed as very limited.

This last point is strengthened by the way in which commitments to market opening in services are to be offered, making use of a "positive list" rather than a "negative list" approach. Under the positive list approach, each country can strategically select the individual service sectors that it is willing to open up at a given time, leaving other sectors to later negotiations. This strengthens the ability of developing countries to control the rate at which their markets are opened.

In contrast to the various negotiations on rules, the outcome of the Round on opening markets is disappointing for the developing countries. In the critical area of agriculture, especially temperate farm products such as cereals and meat, the potential benefits for the South must be viewed as very limited. The final agreement, based on the Blair House deal negotiated between the US and the EU in July 1993, is a far cry from the initial proposals put forth by the US and supported by a number of developing countries. These proposals demanded deep cuts in the export and domestic subsidy programmes of the industrial countries. They were rejected, largely due to the vehement objections of the European Union, French farmers in particular. Cuts that have been agreed upon remain very limited in scope and will take effect over a six-year phase-in period, with the largest cuts scheduled for the end of that period.

From the perspective of developing countries, export subsidies are the most damaging. By allowing farmers from industrial countries to sell products in world markets below their true market price, they distort export markets in favour of Northern producers. In all likelihood, cuts in export subsidies by the US and the European Union will remain too small for developing countries with a competitive edge in temperate farm products, such as Argentina and Uruguay, to make inroads in export markets currently controlled by the North. They will continue to be undercut on price alone.

In addition, a large number of developing countries, including many least developed ones, are large importers of cereals and other temperate food products from the North. As northern exporters continue to flood their markets with agricultural products below market price, there will be little incentive for those countries to become more food self-sufficient. Furthermore, the reductions in export subsidies will have the adverse effect of increasing the price that developing countries must pay for some of their food imports from the North. This eventuality was recognized by the negotiators, and the agreement on agriculture has a provision to compensate net-importer developing countries for possible price increases. However, most developing countries feel this provision is weak because the compensation will be no bigger than is currently available from exporting countries.

In the area of tropical farm products such as spices, essential oils, tobacco, rice, tropical fruits and cut flowers, the

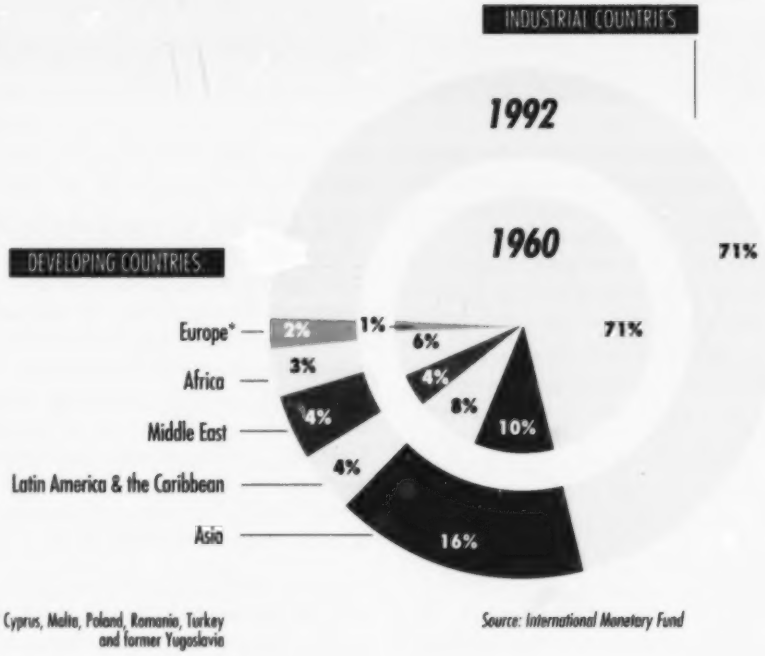
industrial countries do not have as strong a vested interest in protecting their markets since they are mostly net importers. Accordingly, they have shown greater willingness to lower some of their import tariffs. The result is likely to be increased competition among producer developing countries. This will affect negatively the least developed countries, which benefit from preferential tariffs under the Lomé Convention or other General System of Preference (GSP) schemes. As import tariffs for other countries are reduced, the value of their preferential rate will shrink.

In textiles and clothing, the Uruguay Round provides for the integration of the Multi-Fibre Agreement within the GATT system and its gradual conformity to GATT rules. This agreement, which operates on the basis of quotas, has ruled international trade in the sector for about 20 years. The expected result of its inclusion in GATT will be the elimination of most existing quotas, their replacement by tariffs, and the gradual lowering of the barriers on clothing and textiles entering markets in the North. All of this is in the broad interest of developing countries, but there are two problems. First, largely at the insistence of US producers, integration will take place over a 10-year period, with most of the liberalization occurring in the last year of the phase-in. Second, importing countries (i.e., mostly industrial countries) will be able to adopt safeguards to re-protect their markets for a number of years if liberalization proves too damaging to their domestic industry. As it currently stands, the agreement on textiles is unlikely to alter access to industrial country markets in the near term.

The opening of markets in services is another area of great potential value to developing countries. However, the impact of the Round remains to be seen as negotiations on several key service sectors – including basic telecommunications, financial services, maritime services and the movement of service firm personnel – have yet to be concluded. These talks will not be concluded, in some cases, until two years after the agreement takes effect (planned for either January or July 1995).

HOW INTERNATIONAL COMMERCE IS DIVIDED

Percentage shares of world exports and imports in 1992 and 1960



* Cyprus, Malta, Poland, Romania, Turkey and former Yugoslavia

Source: International Monetary Fund

Summary Results of the Most Recent GATT Accords

- Kennedy Round (1964-67): Named for US President John F. Kennedy who had urged the major industrial countries to undertake the negotiations. Key results included an average reduction of about 35 per cent in tariffs on manufactured goods and the introduction of rules against dumping.
- Tokyo Round (1973-79): These talks yielded further reductions in tariffs on industrial goods and made it harder for countries to use licences, customs rules and technical standards to keep imports out.
- Uruguay Round (1986-93): Like past agreements, the latest accord is intended to cut tariffs on a wide variety of goods, including, for the first time, a wide array of agricultural products. It also brings trade in textiles and services under GATT jurisdiction. In addition, the agreement calls for the creation of a new – and in some ways more powerful – World Trade Organization to replace GATT.

It is a characteristic of service industries that many firms cannot export services without moving either capital or labour, or both, to the importing country. Banks need to establish branches, construction firms need to bring engineers and craft persons, and so forth. Developing countries have a major competitive advantage in exports of labour-intensive services that usually require extensive temporary movement of workers by firms to the importing country. Yet most Northern industrial countries have been extremely reluctant to ease access for such temporary labour, in part because of political unease over immigration. It remains to be seen how this particular subset of the negotiations will conclude, leaving developing countries with uncertain market access gains in the area of services.

Trade in the global economic context

How much of a trade increase is likely to be spurred by the Uruguay Round depends on larger forces at work within a broader environment of change worldwide.

For many developing countries, trade liberalization is part and parcel of a larger transformation. They are seeking both faster growth of exports to pay for accumulated external debt and faster growth of imports to spur domestic competition and productivity. While the resulting process of structural adjustment has often proved to be strong and effective medicine in moving countries toward faster growth, it has also been quite costly in social terms Trade liberalization, in the long run, is likely to be beneficial to both developed and developing countries. What has yet to be determined is whether the North is willing to provide the necessary resources to speed up and strengthen the chances of success of structural adjustment in the South, through balance-of-payment adjustment loans, for example, or technical assistance for domestic regulatory reform. The true impact of the Uruguay Round on developing countries may, in no small part, depend on the answer to that question.

This is likely to be true particularly for

For many developing countries, trade liberalization is part and parcel of a larger transformation.

the least developed countries. Continuing worldwide trade liberalization will gradually erode their earlier competitive advantage based on preferential tariffs obtained under GSP schemes. They will be under the greatest pressure to build new strengths to compete in foreign markets, though they have the least resources to manage such adjustments.

Unfortunately, given the limited market access concessions granted by the industrial countries, one has to take a rather guarded view of their real commitment to encouraging growth in the developing world. Indeed, the position taken by the industrial countries has been paradoxical. On the one hand, for example, it is usually agreed that opening up new employment opportunities in the South can help curb the growing flow of migration to the North. Yet it is precisely those areas of trade which offer the greatest job-creation possibilities in developing countries – in textiles, agriculture and labour-intensive services – where the opening of markets offered by industrial countries has been minimal. In addition, these are the very same areas which attract immigrant labour to the North.

The limited market access concessions by the North to developing countries further contradict the experience of countries such as Italy, Spain and Portugal. Following several decades as net exporters of labour, these countries became net importers after developing the very same labour-intensive industries that fled the high labour costs of Northern Europe.

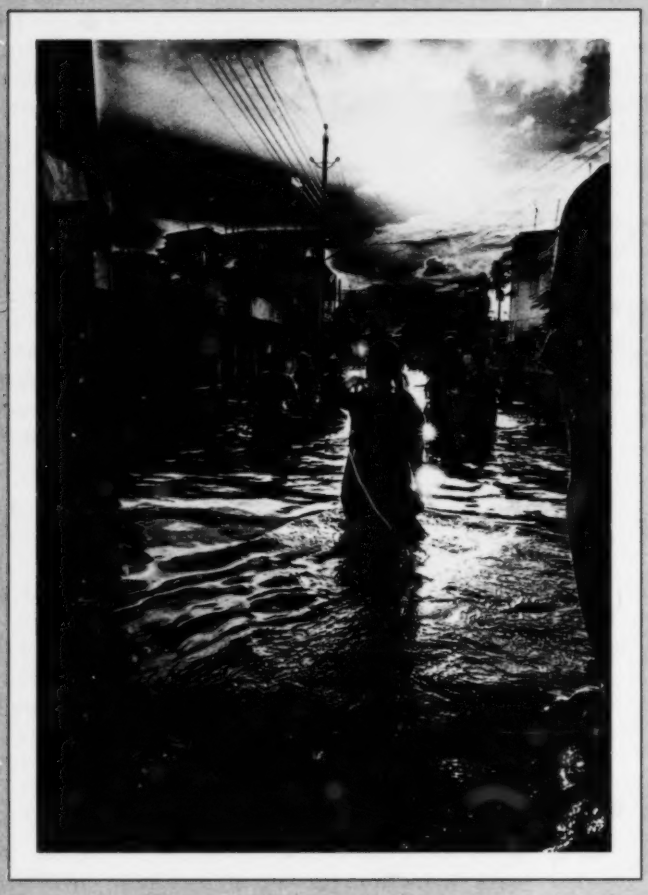
Another issue that may affect the final outcome of the Uruguay Round is the new set of negotiations that are likely to begin immediately after the agreement takes effect, focusing on environment and workers' rights as they relate to trade. Here, developing countries are already becoming concerned that the inclusion of these new issues in the negotiations will become yet another means through which protectionist interests in the North can exert influence.

To conclude, there is a broad consensus that the GATT agreement has the potential to generate new trade and, thus, new wealth in the years to come. Whether developing countries reap all the benefits they should from the results of the Uruguay Round will depend on how well they do in negotiating additional hurdles in the months and years ahead. These include not only strengthening their access to markets in the North, but also obtaining a renewed commitment from the developed countries to support the process of structural adjustment in the South. Finally, the outcome will depend on whether industrial countries can be convinced that their own protectionist tendencies are, in fact, self-defeating. ■

Thierry Noyelle is an economist specializing in international trade and foreign investment issues. He is currently on leave from Columbia University.

Through a Southern Lens

Introduction by Sebastião Salgado



The work of Bangladeshi photographer Shahidul Alam centres around his country's struggle for democracy against the backdrop of people's everyday lives. Above, an area of Dhaka ravaged by the 1988 floods, which left hundreds of thousands of people homeless.

Our ability to survive as human beings is wrapped up in our ability to dream, and to pass our dreams on for others to see. Yet it is mostly people in the rich countries of the North who have held the cameras that so powerfully magnify the world around us. In recent years, however, the work of photographers from developing countries has begun to emerge, like vectors of light, from local darkrooms.

Recorded over months and years, rather than on short assignments, these diverse images force us to look at the developing world in a different light. Yet in many cases, the production and distribution of these images — which I believe essential to modern nation-building — remains underdeveloped. In my travels, I meet many talented young photographers who lack neither dreams nor ambition, but may lack film, paper, or outlets for their work.

Argentine photographer Jorge Saenz, in his photo essay "The Children of Paraguay," portrays the plight of children and adolescents in the context of the UN-endorsed Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Mexican photographer Eniac Martinez Ulloa depicts the lives of the Mixtecs of western Oaxaca, a people determined to preserve their centuries-old culture despite grinding poverty and environmental deterioration. Many Mixtecs have left their traditional lands in search of work in the US, and he has documented the effects of their migration in both countries.

The Mother Jones International Fund for Documentary Photography was founded to help remedy this situation, and I am pleased to have been associated with it for the past four years. Through the fund, we have given many small grants to photographers to help with their projects and, equally important, to have the photographs published and exhibited widely.

In Bangladesh, for instance, the fund assisted Shahidul Alam, who, in addition to his own photography, has founded both a photographic education programme in Dhaka and a photo agency that provides images of the subcontinent to world media. In

Since 1990, Bangladeshi architect and photographer Anwar Hossain has documented migrant workers' lives, which he describes as "a continuous cycle of work and hope, hunger and despair." Throughout the "nooks and corners" of his country's cities and suburbs, he writes, one "confronts thousands of hard-working labourers, young and old, including this tailor who stitches clothes and his own umbrella."

South Africa, two awards have gone to photographers associated with the Center for Documentary Photography in Cape Town, which, for years, has been at the forefront of the movement against apartheid. Another grant winner, Enio Martínez, has photographed the resilient Mixtec Indians of Oaxaca, and their struggle for economic survival and cultural preservation.

We continue to seek worthwhile documentary projects. If you are or know of a talented photographer who could benefit from the programme, please contact:

Mother Jones International Fund
for Documentary Photography
731 Market Street, Suite 600
San Francisco, CA 94103, USA.
Fax: (415) 665 6696.

Santu Mofokeng's work goes beyond the stereotypical news pictures that depict the violence and poverty of Soweto, where he lived for more than a decade, to reveal the deeper reality and humanity of his subjects. While "blacks in South Africa have suffered centuries of denial and oppression," he writes, the negative imagery associated with this as seen in the media "denies the rich and full lives that black people lead."

The above image, by Melchor Lima Hancco, documents a land take-over by campesinos in the southern part of the Peruvian Andes, and is but one result of a social photography workshop in the village of Ayaviri supported by TAFOS. The organization provides cameras, film and training to peasants chosen by local federations to participate. The themes that are developed in the workshops reflect the lives of the campesinos and have helped to promote grassroots organization and cultural identity in a region torn by violence.

Getting On-Line

Barriers to the free flow of information and ideas threaten to derail Agenda 21, the delicate compromise forged at the Earth Summit. The United Nations Development Programme, together with stakeholders in 33 developing countries and territories, have launched an initiative to remove some of these obstacles through the use of computer networks.

By Christopher Reardon

United Nations, New York — Dignitaries arriving in Rio de Janeiro for the 1992 Earth Summit barely cleared customs before they had a chance to witness the urgency of the conference agenda. On either side of the new highway leading from the airport into the city, densely populated *favelas*, or slums, revealed the underside of what was once called an economic miracle. Indeed, the boom in production and commerce that began in the 1970s has not only caused havoc in the Amazon rain forests, but also deepened social stratification in the cities, where three out of four Brazilians live.

Poverty and environmental degradation, of course, are not unique to Brazil. As consequences of unbridled economic expansion, they can be found the world over. To remedy these problems, participants at the Earth Summit sought a more favourable balance — called sustainable development — between economic growth, social equity and environmental protection.

Under *Agenda 21*, the ambitious plan of action they endorsed in Rio, national governments agreed to consult with other stakeholders — including non-governmental organizations (NGOs), universities, research institutes and commercial enterprises — in drafting national plans for pursuing sustainable development. For this pledge to become a reality, however, these institutions must overcome mutual distrust and the inclination to withhold information. They must also surmount technical, logistical and financial barriers to sharing printed reports and spoken advice. Unless pertinent information can be made widely available, *Agenda 21*'s promise of inclusive decision-making may never come about.

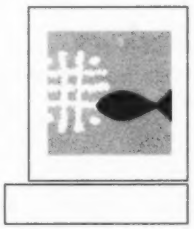
To facilitate the exchange of information, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been working to establish national computer networks in many developing countries. These Sustainable Development Networks, or SDNs, are now operating in Angola, Bolivia, China, Honduras, Indonesia, Nicaragua, Pakistan, the

for Sustainable Development

Philippines, Poland, the Republic of Korea and Tunisia, as well as in 22 island countries and territories in the South Pacific. They provide a timely and cost-efficient medium for individuals, organizations and governments to communicate ideas, share information and relate experiences that bear on the environment and development. In some cases, they may even help to break down antagonisms among users.

A small farmers' cooperative, for example, might tap into the network to get advice on agroforestry from an international agricultural resource centre. Similarly, a business group weighing plans to control pollution through alternative technologies could get pricing information and performance statistics from overseas data bases. Or an island community concerned about storm surges or a rising sea level might obtain geographic and meteorological data to develop appropriate strategies.

With such networks in place, says UNDP's Chuck Lankester, director of the SDN project, developing countries can reduce their dependence on foreign donors and make better decisions in their efforts to reach sustainability. Although the primary emphasis is on sharing information within individual nations, Mr. Lankester says, these networks also hold tremendous potential for improving collaboration among countries, by letting users take into consideration what has succeeded or failed elsewhere, and why.



Using computers and telephone lines, SDNs enable individuals and institutions to send electronic mail, hold private electronic conferences and post messages in public electronic forums. The cost for users is the same as a local telephone call, in most cases, and messages can arrive at their destination in seconds. Already hundreds of messages are being exchanged over SDNs each day, and the traffic is picking up.

By the end of this year, UNDP will have spent a total of US$5 million on the project. These funds provide local users with computers, modems, software, directories of on-line resources and the training needed to use them. They also pay for a coordinator, a computer technician and a clerical worker to maintain each national network.

A steering committee that represents the various stakeholders within a given country actually governs each network. Participatory governance of SDNs is needed, Mr. Lankester says, to help overcome the tendency in many countries to deny access to information — "not so much on the grounds that it might cause revolution in the streets, but because information is power." Before starting a new network, therefore, UNDP requires a commitment from the host government that the conceptualization, implementation and operation of the network will be managed by a committee of stakeholders.

These committees are responsible for defining the scope of their network. Some countries have elected to concentrate on environmental issues, while others, adopting a broader view of sustainable development, have taken into consideration trade, health, education and public works. Users can receive development proposals, impact statements and feasibility studies through their SDN. Yet the networks have proven most successful in cases where answers to specific questions were needed.

Shortly after an SDN opened in Pakistan last year, for example, a user tapped in for advice on how to handle a number of barrels containing an unknown chemical substance. Two men who came across the barrels, which had been dumped near a railway station in Karachi, had already died from inhaling toxic fumes. Hoping to avert further deaths, police then rolled the barrels into the nearby Lyari River.

Participatory governance of SDNs is needed to help overcome the tendency in many countries to deny access to information.

Upon learning of the incident, SDN users in Islamabad sent an appeal for expert advice to PeaceNet and EcoNet, a pair of networks operated by the San Francisco-based Association for Progressive Communications. Within 24 hours, more than 50 responses arrived by fax and electronic mail from Brazil, Finland, Germany, New Zealand, Switzerland, the United Kingdom and the United States. The respondents — who included students, scientists, public health experts, Pakistani expatriates and an official at the US Environmental Protection Agency — identified the deadly substance as meta-dinitrobenzene, a highly toxic and potentially explosive chemical. Under expert supervision, the barrels were then removed from the river and safely incinerated.

Formed in January 1993, the SDN in Pakistan has documented other similar accomplishments. Just as important, it has helped sway the government to liberalize its telecommunications policy and consider privatizing the national post, telephone and telegraph authority, whose high tariffs inhibit easy access to communication and thus weaken the prospects for achieving sustainable development. The SDN is also helping the Pakistan Council for Scientific and Industrial Research to compile an electronic directory of scientific and technical experts within the country. The directory, which can be searched by name, location or field of expertise, will allow for greater use of national experts and reduce reliance on foreign consultants.

Through links to the Internet, a massive computer network that connects thousands of universities and research institutes in almost every industrial nation and a few developing countries, SDN users like those in Pakistan can access distant databases and experts. Due to high telecommunications tariffs in many developing countries, however, access to the Internet remains limited and costly.

But Bolivia has shown that sophisticated computer systems are less important than introducing people and institutions to the rewards of sharing information. While waiting for UNDP to deliver the first computers, Juan Pablo Arce, the project coordinator in La Paz, devised an ingenious interim solution. Noting that virtually every Bolivian has a transistor radio, Mr. Arce convinced radio stations to let people send in questions concerning environment and development by mail or phone. The radio stations then broadcast the inquiries back to the capital at agreed-upon hours, he and his colleagues found the answers, and the radio stations relayed them back to people listening in the countryside.

People began to call in and say, "We have noticed fish being killed in the river, and we suspect it's the sugar cane factory upstream. We would like to know what we can do to stop this. Are there any rules and regulations that apply? Our welfare is being threatened."

Suddenly the whole of Bolivia became accustomed to asking for information pertaining to sustainable development, says Mr. Lankester. "These were people who previously had no idea that access to information and the power of communication could improve their lives." In effect, they developed an information network without computers. The volume of questions soon overwhelmed Bolivia's radio stations, but by then the computers from UNDP had arrived.

Computer networks, by themselves, cannot remove all of the barriers to the free flow of information. Nevertheless, users in many developing countries are beginning to see their promise. By the end of this year, another eight countries will have drawn on UNDP assistance to set up their own Sustainable Development Networks. Another 50 are on the waiting list. ■

Christopher Reardon is a freelance journalist based in New York. His electronic mail address is 71542-642 @ compuserve.com.

LASTTAKE

PHOTO+ESSAY

Last Call for Planet Earth

For those of us who haven't got around to reading the original, a children's edition of *Agenda 21* – the 500-page plan for saving the planet adopted at the 1992 Earth Summit – is now available. Spearheaded by an international NGO named Peace Child International, and supported by UNDP and other UN agencies, *Rescue Mission: Planet Earth* represents the efforts of 10,000 kids in 100 countries. Through writings, drawings and photographs, the book provides capsular views of the growing assault on both people and the natural world, as well as concrete ideas on how all of us – most of all, young people – can help. "No, this isn't another gloom and doom book about eco-disasters with some kindly advice at the end about how to sort your garbage," write the editors – 28 kids ages 12 to 18 – in the book's introduction. "The Rescue Mission is our wake-up call."

Illustration by José Luis Bayer of Chile from *Rescue Mission: Planet Earth*

Rescue Mission: Planet Earth, published by Kingfisher Books, was launched on Earth Day 1994 in Germany, the UK and at the United Nations in the US. The first print-run, originally anticipated at 25,000 copies in English, was four times that number. Moreover, publishers in 11 other countries, including Argentina, Malaysia, Mexico and Thailand, have agreed to produce their own language editions, for a projected total of a quarter of a million copies in 11 languages. From all indications, the action won't stop there. With the book completed, the editors have decided to promote "youth networks" in schools and young people's organizations around the world for the drafting and implementation of local agendas on environment and development.

"We're tired – tired of seeing our beautiful planet polluted, tired of senseless wars, of the poor getting poorer day by day, of waiting for politicians to make decisions they should have made long, long ago," write the editors. With a bit of luck, their call will be heard. – **L.J.**

For more information, contact Rescue Mission Headquarters, Peace Child International, The White House, Buntingford, Herts SG9 9AH, UK. Phone/Fax: (44) 76 327 1459.

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